

House Republican Press Release

October 31, 2005
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Boucher Urges Public to Attend Wilton Meeting November 29 on Danbury Rail Line Improvements



New proposals would improve rail service and enhance Wilton-Norwalk Corridor

State Rep. Toni Boucher, R-143rd, Norwalk, Wilton, urged citizens to attend a public meeting November 29 at Wilton Town Hall Annex from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in Conference Room “A” on plans that would upgrade the Danbury to Norwalk rail line, improve service and enhance the economy of the region.

Rep. Boucher said rail riders and other interested residents have an opportunity to see design plans and alternatives for the long-neglected Danbury Branch Line and speak out on the rail improvements.

“This is the first proposal of any magnitude that has been put forward in the last 30 to 40 years on the branch line,” said Rep. Boucher. “It is very imperative citizens and rail riders come out and speak about vastly improving the Danbury line.”

Rep. Boucher urged riders to make their opinions known once again. She said, “Although many riders of this line have made their feeling known many times in the past and may suffer from complaint fatigue, this may be the time that they can actually affect significant upgrading of a long ignored economic resource.”

“It cannot be overstated how important and vital these improvements will be for the Danbury to Norwalk corridor,” added Rep. Boucher. “These improvements are so necessary and very much overdue. Now is the time for the public to come forward and express their support.”

A variety of rail improvements have been under study, and selected options are being readied for presentation to the public.

Alternative options will be aired at two public meetings scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving in Wilton and New Milford.

The study is being done by consultants from Washington Group International, which is based in Boise, Idaho, and has a Connecticut office in Newington.

Options include:

- Partial electrification of the branch line from Norwalk to a point somewhere past the Merritt Parkway.
- Extension of passenger service from Danbury to New Milford, where there is currently only infrequent freight service, along with track improvements that would allow the trains that are currently limited to speeds of 10 miles per hour in some areas to travel at 50 miles per hour. The estimated cost is \$41 million to \$47 million.
- Electrification of the line between Norwalk and Danbury, with passing sidings added to allow trains going in opposite directions to use the track at the same time, and a modest package of track realignments to speed trains and decrease travel time. In the preliminary study, this alternative was estimated to cost \$168 million to \$189 million.
- “No build” or doing nothing.
- A variation on “no build,” which involves no major construction, but improves service through transportation system management such as shortening travel time in peak hours through express service and trains that skip some stops.

Rep. Boucher said people need to be heard loudly and frequently, if they hope to have any major investment take place in the Danbury Branch Line.

Rep. Boucher serves the 143rd Assembly District of Wilton and Norwalk in the state House of Representatives. She has been a vocal advocate for rail improvements to the Danbury branch and the main rail line to Stamford and New York.